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ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this master's thesis is to describe some therapeutic uses of dramatic play with the mildly aggressive preschool child. The child for whom the suggested play interventions are considered appropriate is characterized by sociality and attachment to both peers and adults, and is not chronically aggressive. After the first chapter's brief introduction, Chapter II of the thesis provides a review of aspects of primarily psychoanalytic theories to help school personnel resolve developmental crises and promote healthy adjustment in young children. Theoretical formulations of the personality dynamics of the aggressive child are then recounted, and literature on aggression and the aggressive child considered relevant to preschool teachers is selectively reviewed. Chapter III describes four themes of dramatic play for therapeutic intervention with aggressive children: the monster or dragon, the wild animal, the giant or witch, and the family. For each theme, one scenario illustrating how the theme can be introduced into children's play activities is presented. In conclusion, the need for empirical studies of the effectiveness of the recommended dramatic play techniques is recognized, and directions for research are pointed out. (Author/RH)

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SOME THERAPEUTIC USES OF DRAMATIC PLAY WITH THE AGGRESSIVE CHILD IN THE PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM

A THESIS

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By

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Chapter I

Introduction

The primary purpose of this paper is to describe some therapeutic uses of dramatic play with the aggressive child in the preschool classroom. Chapter II is a discussion of the theoretical rationale and background of the study. The practical techniques which utilize dramatic play are described in Chapter III.

The underlying assumptions of the paper are consistent with a basically psychoanalytic model of human psychology. Erik Erikson is a primary source and his work forms the core of the theoretical discussion. After the theoretical groundwork has been laid, the author moves to the description of practical techniques. The therapeutic techniques described are intentionally designed to be flexible, and adaptable to different individuals and situations. At the same time, however, they are intended to be sufficiently specific and concrete so that preschool teachers can make ready use of them in the midst of ongoing daily activities.

In short, it is felt that a solid theoretical understanding of the aggressive child must be translated into practical therapeutic techniques which the preschool teacher can use in the classroom. Thus, while an extensive theoretical

background is presented, the primary purpose of the paper is to describe some practical therapeutic techniques utilizing dramatic play which the preschool teacher can employ in dealing with the aggressive child in his* classroom.

*Throughout the paper the masculine pronoun is used to refer to both the aggressive child and the preschool teacher. This is in no way meant to deny that many aggressive children are girls and that many preschool teachers are women. It is merely an editorial convenience.

Chapter II

Theoretical Background and Rationale

Sigmund Freud's early writings on psychoanalytic theory first outlined the idea that the early childhood period is of critical importance to adult personality development. In Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex (S. Freud, 1938), he proposed the idea that the neuroses of adult life are created by the unresolved conflicts of the earliest stages of psychosexual development. Despite challenges, these basic ideas are still widely accepted today.

Anna Freud further developed her father's formulations and organized them into a comprehensive theory and technique of child psychoanalysis (A. Freud, 1946, 1965). In The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense, she refined the concept of fixation point (A. Freud, 1946). This is a point of unresolved conflict in early childhood to which a patient, child or adult, regresses in times of psychological stress. Melani Klein developed a separate system of child analysis (M. Klein, 1960). Her ideas differ in several key respects, both theoretical and technical, from those of Anna Freud. For example, she placed a strong emphasis upon early, insistent interpretation of the child's play in psychosexual terms, while Anna Freud, on the other

hand, felt that the child's ego is too weak for direct interpretation and combines the psychoanalytic approach with more "educational" methods. Despite their disagreements, both Anna Freud and Melani Klein emphasize the critical importance of the early childhood period to personality development (see also M. Klein, 1955).

Other psychoanalysts make the same point. Karen Horney's work emphasizes the individual interacting with and adjusting to social forces and not just mediating the conflicting demands of id, ego, and superego as in the work of earlier psychoanalysts (see Horney, 1937, 1945). Yet she also maintains that the early childhood period has an important influence on later development. For instance, she feels that an individual's direction toward, away from, or against other people is determined in early childhood. Erik Erikson, perhaps the most eloquent and certainly one of the most respected psychoanalysts writing today, also places psychoanalytic theory in a social context (Erikson 1963, 1977). One could also say that while Freud focused on the id, Erikson focuses on the ego. He expands Freud's original psychosexual phases of development into an epigenetic chart of psychosocial stages that continues through adulthood. Yet, he too maintains the psychoanalytic emphasis on the impact of early life experience. For Erikson, the resolution of the conflicts of each of the early childhood stages leaves the developing individual with a varying balance and sense of trust vs mistrust, autonomy vs shame and doubt and initiative

vs guilt. In describing some of the troubled adults that populate our world, he says,

> All these tormented people, then, whether addicted, depressed, or inhibited, have somehow failed to integrate one or another of the infantile (i.e. childhood) stages, and they defend themselves against these infantile patterns - stubbornly, wastefully, unsuccessfully. (Erikson, 1963, p. 61)

This brief overview of psychoanalytic writers serves to indicate that despite differences on both theoretical and technical issues, all psychoanalysts agree that the early childhood period has profound and lasting consequences for adult personality development. In addition, many of Freud's students who later broke away from psychoanalysis also emphasize the formative importance of early life experience.

C.G. Jung is, today, perhaps the best known of those who broke with Freud. Jung disagreed with Freud's narrow conception of the unconscious and with Freud's insistence on an exclusively sexual interpretation of dream symbols. While Jung dedicated most of his work to the understanding of what he called the individuation process in later life, he by no means denied the importance of early childhood. In fact, one entire volume of his collected works is devoted to his writings on the development of personality during the early childhood period (Jung, 1954). Some of Jung's followers have also explored the early childhood years. Michael Fordham, in disagreement with Jung, feels that the individuation process actually begins at birth. He combines Jungian and psychoanalytic concepts in his discussion of the critical impact of

early life experiences on personality development (Fordham, 1970). Frances Wickes, whose work was much admired by Jung himself, also eloquently describes the crucial importance of the early childhood period (Wickes, 1968).

Alfred Adler is another early student of Freud's who later broke away to develop his own theories. Adler felt that the will to power, and not Freud's libido or sexual energy, was the main motivating force in human life (Adler, 1930). He developed the concept of "life style". The psychologically based forerunner of our modern colloquial expression. Adler saw each individual's "life style" as a unique, and all-encompassing system of rules, roles and ideas - a life plan. He felt that through the influence of parents and early education the individual's "life style" is usually fixed in the first five years of life.

Behavior based theories of psychology, such as social-learning theory, have developed in opposition to the speculative inner psychic constructs so central to earlier psychological theories such as psychoanalysis. Yet, most social-learning theorists, while critical of other psychological theories and psychoanalysis in particular - as non-rigorous, non-parsimonious, and non-testable, nonetheless maintain that many adult behavior patterns are the result of early conditioning. As a matter of fact, we find social-learning theory fully of hypothetical events in childhood that would produce the behavior in question (see Miller, 1941; Bandura, 1963). Robert Sears, another social learning theorist, has tested the

validity of many psychoanalytic concepts. He sees these concepts as major motivational systems within a structure of social learning theory (Sears, 1963). Sears also feels that adult behavior patterns are environmentally determined in the early years. Thus, a broad spectrum of psychological theorists, from Freudian psychoanalysts to behavior based learning theorists, concur on the critical importance of the early childhood period to personality development.

In addition, many writers feel that preschool teachers need to be especially aware of the formative impact of the early years. How teachers interact with children in the preschool does have an important influence on personality development. Childhood development is usually a rather bumpy, difficult, and problematic process (see Devereux, 1956; C. Klein, 1975). In fact, most writers see normal childhood development proceeding through a series of critical periods wherein temporary behavior problems and apparent personality disintegration frequently occur (see Gesell, 1946; Ilg, 1955; Erikson, 1963). The American Psychiatric Association calls such temporary disturbances the "transient adjustment reactions of childhood." They are defined as "the transient systematic reactions of the child to some immediate situation or internal emotional conflict." (A.P.A., 1952). A key feature of any adjustment reaction of childhood is that it is usually transient in nature. However, Finch cautions,

> If a youngster has spent several years in the distorted situation, he will have developed a more permanent type of personality problem. This is particularly true of the youngster

> who has reached the latency period age.
> (Finch, 1960, p. 125)

So we see that the normal temporary problems of childhood can become permanent if not appropriately resolved when they first arise in early childhood.

Anna Freud makes a similar point when she suggests that childhood neuroses can be corrected without psychoanalysis if treated in approximately the same phase as that in which the problems first occur (A. Freud, 1965). She indicates that such "corrective emotional experience" can take place in an appropriate educational setting. In fact, as early as 1935, Ms. Freud delivered a series of lectures to the teachers of the Children's Centers of Vienna on the relationship of psychoanalysis to education (A. Freud, 1960). She pointed out that children will transfer their conflicts with parents and siblings to teachers and classmates. She urged the teachers to consider in their work with children the implications of psychoanalytic theory.

Other psychoanalytic writers also emphasize the relevance of psychoanalytic concepts to preschool teachers. Susan Isaacs, a follower of Melani Klein, was one of the first to take psychoanalysis into the nursery school (Isaacs, 1949). She felt that children use dramatic play to work out their inner conflicts. She observed children's free play in order to gain a keener understanding of their psychological dynamics. In Psychoanalysis And The Education of The Child, Pearson points out the importance to teachers of understanding the stages of child development as well as the common

mechanisms of defense (Pearson, 1954). Shrier, in an article on "Psychiatric Consultation at a Day Care Center" (Shrier, 1973), argues convincingly for psychiatric intervention at an early age. Kliman has developed "a clinical method which combines child analysis and early childhood education." He believes that,

> The ready availability of social action and conversation with teachers and peers is developmentally syntonic with the low tension building capacity and low frustration tolerance of preschoolers. (Kliman, 1975, p. 480)

Thus, he sees the preschool as an ideal setting for psychoanalytic intervention. Erik Erikson, in Toys and Reasons (Erikson, 1977), also suggests that teachers can be helpful in providing children with opportunities to work through their developmental problems. (Just how the teacher might do this is a subject to which we will return later). So we see that there is widespread consensus among psychoanalysts on the importance of their theories to the preschool teacher.

Some Jungian writers also discuss the relevance to teachers of understanding the formative processes of the early childhood period. Jung himself wrote an essay on "Child Development and Education" (Jung, 1954). Other Jungians also comment on the teacher child relationship. Frances Wickes advises teachers that the child projects parental attributes upon the teacher and that undercurrents are set in motion between the unconscious of the child and the teacher (Wickes, 1968). Similarly, Michael Fordham describes a case where the brutal mother archetype is projected onto the teacher (Fordham, 1970). Both agree that

teachers need to be aware of these psychodynamic processes in order to facilitate their students' growth.

Alfred Adler felt that "all the responsibility for the ultimate success or failure (of the individual's development) devolves upon education, first upon the family and the school..." (Ganz, 1953, p. 11). He further believed that "...the child's style of life is usually fixed in the course of the first five years of life, so that the influences exerted by the kindergarten may well be decisive." (Ganz, 1953, p. 40). Consequently, he developed and implemented a system of kindergarten education designed to foster the child's optimal healthy personality development (see also Adler, 1930).

Social-learning theorists too are concerned with the effects of early education on continuing patterns of behavior. Bandura and Walters, in particular, cite many studies on the acquisition and reinforcement of certain behavior patterns in classroom situations and draw implications for teaching strategies (Bandura, 1963).

Play therapists also fairly consistently encourage teachers to be aware of the formative psychological processes that are taking place in early childhood. Virginia Axline, in her classic work Play Therapy, devotes an entire chapter to the application of her ideas in the school room. She writes,

> The basic principles of non-directive therapy seem to have far reaching implications for educators.. The primary need for the successful education of the children is sound mental health... (Axline, 1969, p. 139)

Clark Moustakas, another respected play therapist, has written three separate volumes on the application of play therapy principles in the classroom (Moustakas 1956, 1972, 1973). He outlines the ways he feels teachers can contribute to the healthy self-development of their students. Thus, we see that many authorities - psychoanalysts, learning theorists, Jungians, Adlerans, and play therapists, all point out that preschool teachers, in their work with young children, need to be aware of the critical and formative impact of the early childhood period on personality development.

Of particular concern to many preschool teachers is the aggressive child. A glance at the Education Index reveals a long list of articles under the subject heading aggression - twenty-two separate articles in the one year covered by Vol. 27 alone. Also, it is the author's professional experience that the aggressive child is the subject of many, many hours of staff meetings and informal conversations among teachers. Most obviously the aggressive child is a concern to teachers because he disrupts the classroom. He interfers with the constructive learning activities of the other children, disrupts the teacher's activity plans, and often fails to engage in constructive activities himself. Though this list is itself serious enough reason for concern, far more serious is the more subtle, yet equally palpable, disturbance in the aggressive child's own emotional life and personality development. As Clark Moustakas poetically puts it, ..."the self at odds with the world is beset with inner

warfare" (Moustakas, 1966, p. 13).

In other words, as many authorities agree, aggressive behavior can be understood as a symptom of a more widespread personality disorder (see Wolberg, 1944; Redl, 1957). Berkowitz, in his book The Disturbed Child, states that,

> Aggression can take many forms and be related to many different situations, but when it is fairly consistent, whether directed inwardly or outwardly, it is an indication of maladjustment. (P. Berkowitz, 1960, p. 69)

Not only does the aggressive child disrupt classroom activities, but more importantly his aggression is indicative of a disturbance in personality development. Berkowitz continues,

> Overt aggressive behavior is...The expression of a child who is attempting self-preservation...The aggressive child is an anxious child who attempts to relieve anxiety and bolster self esteem by hitting out against the world. (P. Berkowitz, 1960, p. 70)

Such a route to relief and self esteem, while perhaps temporarily effective is not likely to lead to personal success and happiness in the long run as the aggressive child grows up. This pessimistic prognosis is, in fact, borne out by at least one follow-up study. Morris found that in a significant majority of the cases in his study the aggressive behavior patterns of children continued and the original personality disturbance often grew more serious (Morris, 1956).

Erik Erikson, whose thoughts are meant to be a consistent and hopefully untangling thread in this web of ideas, describes aggression and aggressive behavior as the

result of a disturbance in early libidinal development (Erikson, 1963). He seems to specifically ascribe "rage" to the second psychosexual or anal stage of development. While we might trace the roots of aggression to the conflicts of the anal period and subsequent rage, it seems equally realistic and profitable in considering the aggressive preschool child to investigate the problems of the third psychosexual stage - the phallic or oedipal stage. First of all, this stage usually occurs between the age of three and six - the same age as the preschool child to which we are referring. Secondly, Erikson states that what he calls the "intrusive mode" dominates much of the behavior of this stage. This includes:

> The intrusion into other bodies by physical attack; the intrusion into other people's ears and minds by aggressive talking; the intrusion into space by vigorous locomotion... (Erikson, 1963, p. 87)

Several other authors also describe a certain "phallic-locomotor" insertiveness and assertiveness as occurring during this period (e.g. Fraiberg, 1959). All these behaviors seem to be just one "intrusive locomotor" step away from the troublesome and troubled behavior of the aggressive child. Finally, the alternative basic attitudes that Erikson ascribes to this period - initiative vs guilt, are quite likely the very issues with which the aggressive child is so desperately and combatively wrestling. Erikson

himself, puts it thus:

> We recognize in many play constructions what we have come to formulate as the psychosocial problem of initiative...The play themes of this age...often prove to be dominated by the usurpation and ambitious impersonation of victorious self images and the killing off of weak and evil "others"; and we nominate for the principal estrangement which finds expression, aggravation or resolution in childhood play the sense of guilt. Thus the playing child in initiating a...scene, often can be seen to play out the question of what range of activity is open to him and what direction will engulf him in guilt. (Erikson, 1977, pp. 99-100)

Is not the aggressive child trying to discover the same parameters only more desperately and less successfully? Are not these distinctions - where I can initiate and assert myself, and where I overstep the limits and incur social disapproval and personal guilt - the same ones that the aggressive child is unable to make? Without insisting on one psychodynamic locus for the origin of all aggressive behavior*, it does seem reasonable, as outlined above, to suggest that the aggressive preschool child is experiencing particular difficulty in resolving the conflicts of this phallic-locomotor or oedipal period.

The potential personal destruction of initiative gone wrong or denied or guilt rampant or atrophied can easily be imagined - delinquency, crime, success without happiness, self-limiting inhibition, apathy, indifference, etc. Erikson outlines the possibilities most thoroughly and

*Melani Klein, however, does assert that the origins of aggression can be seen in the Oedipus conflict (M. Klein, 1960).

eloquently. He begins:

> ...initiative is a necessary part of every act, and man needs a sense of initiative for whatever he learns and does, from fruit gathering to a system of enterprise...The danger of this stage is a sense of guilt over the goals contemplated and the acts initiated...(Erikson, 1963, p. 255)

The practical problem to be considered in this paper is how to control and redirect aggression, while, at the same time, leaving the child's healthy sense of initiative intact. Erikson continues:

> In adult pathology, the residual conflict over initiative is expressed either in hysterical denial, which causes the repression of the wish or the abrogation of its executive organ by paralysis, inhibition, or impotence, or in over-compensatory showing off, in which the scared individual so eager to "duck" instead "sticks his neck out." (Erikson, 1963, p. 257)

So we see that the origin of many adult personality problems can be traced back to the early childhood conflict of initiative vs guilt. Next Erikson goes on to point out even broader consequences:

> We must not think only of individual psych-pathology, but of the inner powerhouse of rage which must be submerged at this stage, as some of the fondest hopes and wildest phantasies are repressed and inhibited. The resulting self righteousness...can later be most intolerantly turned against others...On the other hand, even moral man's initiative is apt to burst the boundaries of self restriction, permitting him to do to others, in his own or in other lands, what he would neither do nor tolerate being done in his own home. (Erikson, 1963, pp. 257-258)

Thus, the resolution of this early period's conflicts can have profound ramifications not only in personal life, but also in the social and political arenas as well. Erikson

sums up his thoughts by bringing us back to the individual life cycle:

> ...The "oedipal" stage results not only in the aggressive establishment of a moral sense restricting the horizon of the permissible, it also sets the direction toward the possible and the tangible which permits the dreams of early childhood to be attached to the goals of an active adult life. (Erikson, 1963, p. 258)

With a healthy balance of initiative vs guilt, the fervent wishes of early childhood can be purposefully transformed into the fulfilling realities of adulthood. Is this not our own fervent wish for the children with whom we work?

To summarize then, the theoretical and clinical evidence indicates that consistently aggressive behavior in the preschool child is often indicative of a more widespread personality disorder and that this personality disturbance is likely to continue and to have profound effects on adult life. It is this paper's contention that because these early disturbances can have such profound and lasting effects it is very important to initiate therapeutic interventions at the preschool level in order to help the child redirect and rechannel his aggressive behavior. How we respond to the aggressive preschooler can have lasting effects, for the patterns that are begun now will form the basis of the adult personality.

Before proceeding to investigate the resources which are available to the preschool teacher who is both faced with the aggressive child in his classroom and concerned with the critical effect of the early childhood period on later personality development, it is important to develop a working

definition of what is meant by the aggressive child. Finch makes the distinction between two types of aggressive personality disorders in children. The first, the "aggressive syndrome," is a mild disturbance which can be included under the heading "transient adjustment reaction of childhood." Therefore, in this paper, it is considered appropriate for the preschool teacher to work with this type of child. Finch cites a brief definition:

> The aggressive syndrome is defined as a persistent reaction to frustration with irritability, temper tantrums, and destructive behavior.(Finch 1960, p. 144)

Typical behavior also includes fighting and physical attacks, hitting, kicking, scratching, and biting, as well as verbal aggression, threats, etc., and other antagonistic behavior. It is not, of course, the occasional fight or threat, but the consistent and persistent display of these behaviors which indicates the maladjustment of the "aggressive syndrome." Finch goes on to add that,

> This type of child is, however, dependently attached to others and reacts resentfully when these dependent needs are not met. His excessive dependency cannot conceivably be satiated and the consequent frustration leads to his striking out aggressively at the environment.(Finch, 1960, p. 144)

This is the aggressive child who is the subject of this paper.

By contrast, the second category of aggressive personality disorder in childhood, the "anti-social or chronic aggressive reaction," is a more severe disturbance

and, therefore, is considered more appropriate for referral to a trained mental health professional. This type of child

> ...come(s) into frequent conflict because of aggressive and egocentric acts...meet(s) society with unbridled and immature aggression...It takes very little to make him furious, and then he strikes out...He cannot accept the rules and regulations... resents authority and enjoys expressing aggression openly and physically...They have poor relationships with everyone and the moment anyone attempts to frustrate or inhibit them they are angered. (Finch, 1960, p. 132).

This second type of child is not considered in this paper.

Although the "anti-social or chronically aggressive" child's outbursts of aggression do tend to be both more frequent and more violent, the key point in this distinction is the number and quality of relationships which the child forms. The aggressive child discussed in this paper is social and makes attachments to both peers and adults. His aggression, in fact, is often a reaction to the frustration of dependency needs. On the other hand, the "chronically aggressive" child (not considered in this paper) is generally anti-social and usually meets the world, peers and adults alike, with immediate hostility and aggression. Of course, this distinction will not always be easily made. Nonetheless, it is the author's professional experience that the categories set out above as a working definition of the aggressive child will be useful and meaningful to most preschool teachers.

This aggressive child usually presents daily pressing problems to the preschool teacher. How does one best control his aggressive behavior so that the constructive learning activities of the other children can continue? How does one

redirect his aggression so that he participates in construtive learning activities himself? Moreover, how does one best respond to the inner conflicts that this child is expressing by his aggressive outbursts? Strict disciplinarian limit-setting may curtail the disruptive behavior, but it usually erupts again. A totally laissez-faire attitude, even when intended to give the child the opportunity to work out his aggressive feelings, often leads to a chaotic classroom. Vacillation between the two poles also seems to aggravate the problem. Teachers certainly need approaches that work for them in effectively controlling aggressive behavior in their classrooms, but, and more importantly, the aggressive child also needs approaches that work for him by intervening in negative patterns of behavior before they are perpetuated into fixed modes of expression and lasting unhappiness. The aggressive child and the sensitive, concerned preschool teacher both need therapeutic techniques that will help the child to resolve the psychological conflicts at the root of his aggressive behavior.

The available literature on aggression and the aggressive child to which the concerned preschool teacher might turn for assistance in dealing with the aggressive child in his classroom is vast indeed. For the purposes of this discussion, then, the literature will be divided into five categories. Although these categories naturally are not discrete, it is hoped that their use clarifies the presentation. The first category is the theoretical literature which

discusses the various theories of aggression. Second is the research literature which documents research studies on aggression. Third is the clinical literature which deals with aggression as it appears in the child guidance clinic or the office of the professional psychotherapist. The fourth category is the literature on child management which discusses discipline techniques. Fifth is the literature of mental health in the schools which discusses approaches to aggression in the classroom in terms of psychological health. Of course, each of these categories contains far more works than could possibly be even mentioned in this paper. Thus, the titles and authors cited are meant as examples illustrative of the strengths and weaknesses of the literature from each category in relation to its usefulness to the preschool teacher searching for therapeutic techniques of dealing with the aggressive child.

On Aggression by Konrad Lorenz is perhaps the most well-known of the many works on the theory of aggression (Lorenz, 1971). Although his work is based on studies of animal behavior, his main purpose is to raise specualtions on the meaning and function of aggression in humans. Ashley Montagu takes a similar approach in The Nature of Human Aggression (Montagu, 1976). Both conclude that human aggression is at least partly inate or genetically determined. Aggression: A Social-Psychological Analysis (L. Berkowitz, 1962) and Human Aggression (Storr, 1968) deal more directly with the psychology of human aggression. Berkowitz discusses

the frustration-aggression hypothesis, mentioning Freud, but relying heavily on the work of Dollard in social-learning theory. Some studies are cited, but the discussion is primarily theoretical. Storr specifically discusses aggression in child development. He feels that aggression can be both a reaction to frustration and part of a drive for mastery. Another source of theoretical speculation on aggression is the psychoanalytic literature - for example, Heinz Hartmann's "Notes on the Theory of Aggression" (Hartmann, 1949). Hartmann continues the ongoing psychoanalytic debate on whether aggression is a function of the sex instinct or part of a separate death instinct. In general, the excellent theoretical literature, although it contributes a great deal to the understanding of aggression, does not, by its very nature, meet the practical needs of the preschool teacher.

Much of the research literature, even when it does deal directly with the preschool child, often considers factors over which the preschool teacher can have little control. For example, a study by Muste on aggressive behavior in preschool children indicates that aggressive responses increase with age and that the frequency of aggressive responses is higher among boys than among girls (Muste, 1947). Another study considers the effects of family attitudes and socio-economic status in determining aggressive behavior (Yoneyama, 1955). The work of social-learning theorists, on the other hand, sometimes comes closer to

considering variables relevant to classroom situations (see Dollard, 1939, Bandura, 1963). However, they focus narrowly on behavior per se and, generally, ignore the psychodynamic dimensions of personality development - the importance of which is so central to this paper. Thus, although the research literature helps to clarify the effect of certain variables - such as sex, age, and socio-economic status - on aggression, it does not provide much practical guidance to the preschool teacher searching for therapeutic methods of dealing with the aggressive child in his classroom.

In the clinical literature, there is a great deal written by psychoanalysts discussing the development and meaning of aggression in the various libidinal stages (e.g., A. Freud, 1949; B. Rank, 1949; Frijling, 1972). These works are based on clinical cases, but consider their clinical evidence in relation to the stages of psychosexual development. Erik Erikson's Childhood and Society, while not dealing specifically with aggression, is similar to the works above in that it applies clinical evidence to theoretical formulations (Erikson, 1963). This type of approach is invaluable to the psychodynamic understanding of aggression in children. Nonetheless, it, too, does not seek to provide practical suggestions for the preschool teacher.

Other works in the clinical field do describe some practical therapeutic interventions. The writings of play therapists include many case studies of aggressive children and examples of aggressive episodes and how they were handled

therapeutically (e.g., Rogers, 1939; Rogerson, 1939; Moustakas, 1959; Axline, 1969). Still other clinical practitioners have written books intended to help parents understand and deal with their children, which also include advice on handling aggression (e.g., Fraiberg, 1959; Dreikurs, 1964; Wickes, 1968). Teachers frequently do consult both of these types of works, and they can, in fact be quite valuable in deepening one's understanding of children and children's aggression. However, just how the practical procedures which they relate might be transposed from the play therapy room or the living room to the classroom is not made clear.

So we come to the literature of child management. William Blatz, in The Management of Young Children advises balancing discipline and freedom without really explaining how to do this (Blatz, 1930). Hymes similarly suggests employing cooperative, constructive discipline and the development of more inner discipline (Hymes, 1949). Payne's answer to his own question - "So how do we get order among sixty noisy children in a classroom?", while possibly effective, seems to leave something to be desired in terms of a therapeutic technique:

> First bring them into present time..."Hallo! Hallo! Hallo!" said slowly, loudly, firmly, and kindly will bring silence in a few seconds. Then the teacher says "good" or "Thank you". That equals the first step, "Stop". The next step is change. "Get out your painting books." "Thank you". And the third step, "Now paint," equals start in a new direction and completes the cycle. (Payne, 1959, p. 132)

Many recent authors, in their often inspiring attempts to

revitalize American elementary and secondary education, warn us against the use of punishment as a means of discipline (e.g., Holt, 1972). The studies of social-learning theorists also emphasize that punishment is often not effective in decreasing aggression (see Bandura, 1963). There is, in fact, much general agreement among social-learning theorists with the results of studies, like the one by Paul Brown on "Control of Aggression in a Nursery School Class" (Brown, 1965), which indicate that aggressive behavior can be successfully controlled by teachers systematically ignoring aggression and attending to acts incompatible with aggression. While such techniques are often effective in controlling behavior, the social-learning theorists again ignore the crucial psychodynamic dimensions of personality development. In general, the literature of child management, while excellent as far as it goes, does not provide the concerned preschool teacher with techniques that are not only practical and effective, but also therapeutic.

Before considering the final category - the literature of mental health in the schools, it may be helpful to clarify what is meant by therapeutic and therapuetic technique. As used in this paper, therapeutic generally has the implications of psychotherapeutic. That is to say the healing of personal suffering based on the understanding of psychological dynamics. Thus, a therapeutic technique, in the context of this paper, is one that is not solely or even primarily concerned with controlling or changing behavior, but rather a technique that

is concerned with resolving the inner psychological conflicts and troubles that are the source of the outer troublesome behavior. It is not suggested that preschool teachers attempt to be psychotherapists, but only that a preschool teacher with an understanding of childhood psychodynamics and the appropriate techniques can perform an important preventive mental health function by facilitating the resolution of the normal conflicts and adjustment problems of early childhood.

Does the literature of mental health in the schools provide such therapeutic techniques? The titles are promising: Therapeutic Education, Meeting Children's Emotional Needs,...Psychoeducational Therapy in The Classroom. But, let us look more closely. Therapeutic Education is described as dynamic, specialized, individualized, and wholistic (Devereux, 1956). It's goals are individualization and socialization. However, practical suggestions for accomplishing these goals are sparsely developed. D'Evelyn's suggestions for Meeting Children's Emotional Needs seem to boil down to kindly limit setting (D'Evelyn, 1957). Cleugh also suggests that teachers be kindly and sympathetic, rather than punishing (Cleugh, 1951). The description of...Psycho-educational Therapy in The Classroom also remains general (P. Berkowitz, 1960). Berkowitz merely outlines a few discipline techniques, the healthy classroom atmosphere, and what he calls "need acceptance therapy" - an attitude of acceptance on the part of the teacher of the children's needs. Even Alfred Adler's writings on his kindergarten say more about

teacher attitude and classroom atmosphere than about practical therapeutic techniques (Adler, 1930; also Ganz, 1953). Clark Moustakas in his works on applying the principles of play therapy in the classroom encourages teachers to develop more authentic relationships with students (Moustakas, 1966, 1972, 1973). His points are eloquently and even inspiringly made, but he too fails to provide much in the way of practical therapeutic classroom techniques. Virginia Axline's System of Mental Health in the Schools is also dissappointingly vague (Axline, 1969).

We turn now to the work of Fritz Redl who is, today, perhaps the most experienced authority on dealing with groups of aggressive children (see Redl 1951, 1957, 1966). Much of his writing is based on his experience as the director of a residential treatment home for extremely aggressive school-age boys. Although these are not the same children who are discussed in this paper, a great deal of what he has written is still pertinent. As Redl, himself, points out the ego development of these severely disturbed pre-adolescents is comparable to that of the normal preschool child. His presentation is clear, readable, and detailed. His discussion of therapeutic milieu, educational structure and program, and "techniques for the antiseptic manipulation of surface behavior" is superb. He sets the context into which more directly therapeutic techniques could fit and work so well. Unfortunately, he fails to provide them. Charles Wolfgang, in his book Helping Aggressive and Passive Preschoolers Through

Play also develops a comprehensive program of interventions for teachers to use with their problem preschoolers (Wolfgang, 1977). Like Redl he includes excellent sections on the use of program and structure. Then, he goes one step further. He describes some specific therapeutic techniques involving the use of social dramatic play. Finally, an author describes some practical therapeutic techniques that the preschool teacher can make use of in dealing with the aggressive child. One author in a long search. Obviously much more is needed. In general, then, the literature of mental health in schools, while often valuable in creating a more sympathetic and psychologically sensitive attitude toward the behavior problems of children, also fails, except in one case, to provide the preschool teacher with practical therapeutic techniques to use with the aggressive preschool child.

Thus, an extensive and systematic review of the literature finds it lacking. The preschool teacher, who is faced with the aggressive child in his classroom and concerned with the critical importance of the early childhood period to personality development, finds that practical therapeutic techniques are insufficiently developed in the available literature. While the literature in each of the categories is often excellent - both informative and thought-provoking, practical therapeutic techniques are generally not presented. There is a need for further translation and extrapolation from the material of the existing literature into practical therapeutic techniques that preschool teachers can use with the aggressive child in their classrooms. It is hoped that the

techniques to be presented in Chapter III of this paper will be a useful contribution to this translation process.

The comments of many writers, on the therapeutic value of play, suggest play, and specifically dramatic play, as a rich medium for the development and application of practical therapeutic techniques. Early psychoanalysis understood children's play in primarily two ways: first, as a type of repetition compulsion; second, as serving a cathartic function (see S. Freud, 1935, 1937). These theories essentially suggest that the growing child reenacts painful experiences in order to work off pent-up emotions and to find imaginary relief for past frustrations. Melani Klein, who utilizes the child's dramatic playacting in her psychoanalytic technique, states that,

> Early analysis has shown that in play the child not only overcomes a painful reality, but is assisted in mastering its instinctual fears and external dangers by projecting them onto the outerworld. (M. Klein, 1960, p. 246).

Susan Isaacs follows Melani Klein, but takes psychoanalysis into the nursery school. She claims that in free dramatic play children work out their inner conflicts in an external field, thereby lessening the pressure of conflict and diminishing feelings of guilt or anxiety (Isaacs, 1949). This dramatic play makes it easier, she believes, for the child to control his behavior and to accept the limits of the real world, whereby the development of the ego and the sense of reality are fostered. Lili Peller, in her study of play and the libidinal phases, writes,

> Play has a cathartic function. It serves as a safety valve for pent-up instinctual pressures...Play is a step toward sublimation... The first successful mediations (between the demands of the id, the superego, and reality) are achieved in play. (Peller, 1954, pp. 180-181)

Erik Erikson also points out "the capacity of the ego to find recreation and self-cure in the activity of play"... (Erikson, 1963, p. 209). He goes on to further develop this idea:

> Play, then, is a function of the ego, an attempt to synchronize the bodily and the social processes with the self...the emphasis, I think, should be on the ego's need to master the various areas of life...To hallucinate ego mastery and yet also to practice it is the purpose of play... (Erikson, 1963, pp. 211-212).

In other places, Erikson emphasizes the role of play in healing psychological hurts: "For to 'play it out' is the most natural self-healing measure childhood affords" (Erikson, 1963, p. 222); and "...there is something in the nature of childhood play that is therapeutic in the deepest sense." (Erikson, 1977, p. 54). Thus, for Erikson, play has the dual function of assisting in ego mastery and facilitating a self-healing process.

The version of child psychotherapy which we have come to call play therapy is, as the name implies, largely based on the self-healing effect of children's play (see Moustakas, 1959; Axline, 1969). The following long quote, from Child Treatment and the Therapy of Play by Lydia Jackson, is included because it so thoroughly sums up one experienced play therapist's thoughts on play:

> Dramatic play is the type which interests us especially because of its therapeutic possibilities. The function of dramatic or imaginative play is very complex, for it may be an expression of a variety of needs...He may, by working himself up into a state of angry excitement or of a highly pleasurable sense of mastery, seek the experience, and learn the control of the emotions...By providing objects for the child's emotions, dramatic play becomes a safe vehicle of negative projection - The tendency common to both children and adults to ascribe their own, mostly antagonistic, feelings to persons in their environment - and thus deflects the forces which contain the potentiality of trouble into innocuous channels of fantasy. Play thus becomes an outlet and a form of confession. At the same time, it performs a function of integration, for by "playing through" his emotional attitudes toward himself, the child puts himself in the place of the persons in his environment, tests the strength and quality of his emotions, as well as his control over them, and builds up his personality in the process, emerging finally as a more complete and better integrated individual...what he gains is not practical skills, but an inner balance on which depends his future emotional development and the success of his relationships with other human beings. (Jackson, 1950, pp. 10-12).

Other child therapists and child watchers repeat the theme. Gordon Hamilton, for example, writes that,

> Play offers opportunity for growth, for release of tension, for practice in new achievements, for testing and development...Through it he learns how to meet new situations, to increase his mobility, to bring together fantasy and reality and distinguish the two, to build ego strength, and to dilute frightening and traumatic events by reproducing them in harmless disguises. (Hamilton, 1960, p. 182).

Cass states that, "Play offers healing...play is the working partner of growth" (Cass, 1973, p. 12). Even a determined cognitive specialist like Jean Piaget points out the therapeutic effect of play.

> It is, primarily, affective conflicts that reappear in symbolic play...Generally speaking, symbolic play helps in the resolution of conflicts

> and also in the compensation of unsatisfied needs, the inversion of roles (such as obedience and authority), the liberation and extension of the self...(Piaget, 1969, p. 60).

Thus, we see that there exists a fairly widespread consensus on the general therapeutic effect of children's play.

In addition, many authors even specifically suggest or describe the use of play and dramatic play in relation to aggressive impulses or with the aggressive child. Melani Klein and Susan Isaacs both encouraged the playing out of aggressive feelings (see M. Klein, 1960; Isaacs, 1949). Selma Fraiberg describes the healthy attempts of a young client to come to terms with his aggressive impulses by alternately playing the roles of fierce tiger and fearless hunter. Erikson, too, suggests that the child can use his play

> ...to feel reassured of the chance of subduing destructive forces within and fighting inimical ones without and thus to continue to feel like a new being capable of utilizing new competencies in an ever widening present. (Erikson, 1977, p. 45)

Again other child workers make similar points. Clark Moustakas and Virginia Axline describe many cases of their young clients playing out their aggression (Moustakas, 1959; Axline, 1969). Jackson states that play can help a child to master his aggressive feelings. Lauretta Bender and Gordon Hamilton also describe the positive effect of playing out aggression (L. Bender, 1952, Hamilton, 1960). Haim Ginott states that,

> Symbolic release enables children to channel distructive urges into harmless outlets and to develop sublimations compatible with social demands and mores. (Ginott, 1961, p. 103)

In a similar vein Cass writes:

> Play is one of the most important ways in which children learn that feelings can be safely expressed, that aggression and hostility can be controlled and managed, and that its energy is available to be used constructively. (Cass, 1973, p. 27)

Charles Wolfgang, as already mentioned, describes helping aggressive preschoolers through play, including social dramatic play (Wolfgang, 1977). Lawson, in a paper on "Techniques in Managing the Aggressive Child," suggests the use of role playing (Lawson, 1967). Gumaer describes how counselor initiated role playing reduced the potential for physical aggression among the children in his study (Gumaer, 1975). So there seems to be widespread agreement on the potential therapeutic effectiveness of the use of play and dramatic play with the aggressive child. Again, however, specific practical techniques that the preschool teacher can employ are not spelled out.

In much of the above the terms play and dramatic play seem to be used synonymously, or, at least, interchangeably. Consequently, it is felt that a brief clarification of what is meant by dramatic play is in order. For the purposes of this study, dramatic play will be defined according to the usage common in the professional educational community. Dramatic play, then, is taken to mean the spontaneous imaginative play-acting that is the usual occupation of the young child in free play. This can be engaged in alone - other roles filled by imaginary players, or with the participation of other children. This dramatic play may or may not include the use of toys or

other play objects. The primary meaning, as used herein, is imaginative acting out in play.

This author's contention that dramatic play is an especially appropriate and fertile medium for the development and implementation of therapeutic techniques in the preschool is also based on several characteristics of dramatic play itself. First, it is natural and spontaneous. Oscar Wilde once said, "Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask and he will tell you the truth," (Wilde, 1955). As some of the literature cited above suggests, the same is true of children. When a child is masked in a dramatic play role, he is likely to be showing us his true inner feelings. Second, this spontaneous dramatic play is usually on-going. The teacher, then, doesn't need to create or persuade the child to participate in some new activity. Which brings us to our third point: the teacher can often just "plug in" to the flow of the on-going dramatic play. There is almost always room for another role or additional stage directions. In other words, fourthly, the teacher can subtly orchestrate and channel the flow of the play drama in order to facilitate the therapeutic effect of the play for a particular child or children - for example, the aggressive child. The teacher can effect this orchestration either as a participant by assuming a role in the play-acting or as an interested observer by offering suggestions and directions. This will all be made more explicit in the next chapter when the techniques are described. For now, the point

is simply to outline the reasons for the contention that dramatic play is an especially rich and appropriate medium for the development and implementation of therapeutic techniques in the preschool.

There is also support in the literature for the suggestion that teachers intervene in children's dramatic play. Hartly recommends that teachers make the most of and even introduce the means of expression for children to play out their problems. He writes:

> ..We must learn to free the child, while he is still a child, from his conflicts, his terrors, and his rages...(teachers must) use each episode as an opportunity for the child to express all of his confused fantasies, fears, misinterpretations and misconceptions, all of his painful angry yearnings and conflicts, and all of his exaggerated fears and guilts. (Hartly, 1952, p. 5)

Erikson points out that,

> Modern play therapy is based on the observation that a child seems to be able to use the protective sanction of an understanding adult to regain some play peace. Grandmothers and favorite aunts may have played that role in the past; its professional elaboration of today is the play therapist. (Erikson, 1963, p. 222)

Might not the preschool teacher, somewhere in between the grandmother and the play therapist, also play that role today? Elsewhere, in fact, Erikson does seem to suggest that through involvement in his play the teacher can "help the playing child to do what he cannot do alone for long," namely to come to terms with his fears and impulses and gain a sense of competence and self-confidence (Erikson, 1977, p. 45). Hartly goes on to be somewhat more specific:

> In other words, to free the child, it is frequently necessary for the teacher to support him in situations where he has not yet enough courage of his own, and help create an opportunity for him to play an hitherto avoided role...(Hartly, 1952, p. 98)

Charles Wolfgang suggests similar teacher interventions to facilitate social dramatic play as a means of helping troubled preschoolers. In conclusion, Hartly sums up her ideas on dramatic play and issues a call to action:

> ...it seems to us that spontaneous dramatic play in preschool and kindergarten groups is as promising an instrument for growth as the play within the clinician's office is for therapy. The teacher alone holds the key to this construtive force. Only through her sensitivity to the individual child, her insight into the basic processes of living, and her skill in group management can the potentials of dramatic play be realized. There is still much to learn, but, of all people, teachers are not the ones to shirk the learning. (Hartly, 1952, p. 98)

Thus, Hartly urges teachers to further develop the therapeutic potential of dramatic play. The techniques described in the next chapter are an attempt to do just that.

Chapter III

The Techniques

The therapeutic uses of dramatic play with the aggressive child in the preschool classroom described in this paper will be divided into four basic themes. The four themes are: the monster or dragon; the wild animal; the giant or witch; the family.* These themes have been chosen because they are the ones most frequently described in the literature as regularly occurring in children's play and/or as being typically related to children's aggression.

It would be impossible to cite all the places in the literature where these themes are mentioned. Consequently, the following are just a few representative examples. Gordon Hamilton discusses the relation between fantasy monsters and children's hostile and aggressive impulses (Hamilton, 1960). Lauretta Bender describes several cases of children playing wild animals (L. Bender, 1952). Selma Fraiberg, in passage cited earlier, relates a young child's healthy attempts to come to terms with his aggressive impulses by alternately

*The distinctions and interrelationships of meaning among these various symbols is a fascinating and complex topic in itself. The very complexity of the subject, however, prevents us from exploring it very deeply in this paper. The interested reader is referred to the literature on the psychological interpretation of fairy tales (esp. Von Franz, 1970; Bettelheim, 1977)

playing the role of fierce tiger and fearless hunter (Fraiberg, 1959). Erik Erikson, discussing a child referred because of aggressive behavior, remarks:

> At this stage a little boy likes to pretend that he is a giant because he is afraid of giants, for he knows all too well that his feet are much too small for the boots he wears in his fantasies. (Erikson, 1963, p. 31)

Haim Ginott writes:

> A child who is angry with his father can stab or shoot a father doll. The aggressive child may symbolically destroy his parents... over and over again in his play games and thus learn from his own experience that his impulses do not actually kill anybody. (Ginott, 1961, p. 103).

Cass, with a similar emphasis, states that,

> To show anger, which children often feel in relation to their parents but which they are obliged to hide and disguise, is possible in home play (i.e., play about home situations). The setting is right and with no conscious awareness of what is happening, their hostility and aggression are able to find a safe constructive outlet, either verbally or by dumping the baby in the bed... (Cass, 1973, p. 80)

Susan Isaacs mentions several of the themes:

> Wild animals will represent the child's anger and greed and fear of punishment just as the loving mother and babies will represent his belief in love and the goodness of the parents...When the child plays at being father and mummy and the family of babies, the giant and the giant killer, the wild animal and the hunter...he is externalizing his inner drama, the various aspects of his inner personality...When he can...express these fantasies in active play his inner tension is eased and a new equilibrium of mental health is obtained. (Isaacs, 1968, p. 69)

Thus, these four themes - the monster or dragon, the wild animal, the giant or witch, the family - have been chosen

because they regularly occur in children's spontaneous dramatic play and because they are typically related to children's aggressive impulses and feelings.

For each theme, one scenario will be presented in detail. Each scenario, while illustrating a particular theme, will also demonstrate a different degree of teacher intervention and group participation. As Wolfgang points out, teacher behavior can be viewed as a continuum moving from directive to non-directive (Wolfgang, 1977). The most structured forms would be physical help and modeling. Moving toward the less structured end of the continuum, we have verbal directions, verbal questioning, and then non-directive verbal statements. On the extreme unstructured end of the teacher behavior continuum, we have visual looking-on. There are also many different ways and degrees to which the teacher and other children can participate in the play. Each scenario described, then, is meant as an example of one among many possible improvisations on the theme and as an example of a particular degree of teacher intervention and group participation. Thus, the scenarios presented in no way exhaust all the possibilities, and the reader is encouraged to envision and create other potential play sequences.

The Monster or Dragon

The Scene: A relatively quiet moment in the yard provides the opportunity for the teacher and the aggressive child to interact one-to-one. The child is, for the moment, not engaged in any particular activity.

Teacher: Would you like to play monster?

Child: O.K.

Teacher: Well, what should we do?

Child: You be the monster.

Teacher: O.K. Now what do I do?

Child: You try to get me.

(The teacher chases the child with appropriate growls and menacing gestures, adjusting the volume, intensity and proximity of the chase so that the play is exciting without being threatening or too frightening to the child.)

Child: Pow, Pow! I got you. You're killed. (The child shoots the monster with imaginary or prop pistol or raygun.)

Teacher: Aaargh! You got me. I'm dead.

The scenario can be repeated, almost endlessly, by having the monster come back to life. The teacher can end the play, when it becomes too exciting or uninteresting by saying, "The monster is gone for today. You chased him off." If necessary, he can redirect the child to some other activity, such as sand play or climbing.

Although the child was originally quiet, he is encouraged to play out his aggressive feelings. These feelings are already there in the aggressive child and playing them out can be very therapeutic. In fact, the child's quiet mood at the beginning of the sequence may make it more likely that he will be able to play out some of his aggressive feelings without becoming too excited and losing control.

In this scenario, the child can externalize his own, sometimes frightening, aggressive impulses onto the monster, and then triumphantly control them. He can also experience some of his conflicts with powerful authority figures, such as parents and teachers, and openly express his hostility toward them in a harmless, yet therapeutic, fashion. The teacher's participation can give him the sense that his feelings are normal - O.K. - and can be expressed in acceptable ways.

The child spontaneously kills the monster. To most preschool children, to kill means to make go away and death means gone away. For preschoolers, the word kill retains its violent connotations, but not its permanence and irreversibility. Thus, the child aggressively makes the monster go away, but he can always return.

The teacher subtly orchestrates the scenario. His basic approach, here, is to use questions. This can help to give the child the sense that he can control the scene and the aggressive feelings which he portrays. In another situation, where the child begins the play at a higher level of excitement or quickly becomes over-excited, a directive approach might be more appropriate in order to help the child maintain control. Some examples of this will be given in other scenarios.

<u>The Wild Animal</u>

The Scene: The aggressive child has wandered off to a relatively deserted corner of the yard and is engaged in solitary dramatic play. The teacher approaches and, at first,

merely looks on. Eventually, the child verbally includes the teacher.

Child: There's a big lion out there. He's gonna eat me up.

Teacher: There's a big lion that wants to eat you up. Maybe you can capture him before he gets you.

Child: Uhuhh, no, he has big teeth.

Teacher: Well, maybe you better take your gun (the teacher pantomimes putting a rifle over his shoulder or a pistol in his holster) and your rope. (The teacher pantomimes putting a rope on his shoulder or belt - the gun and rope can be imaginary or available props.) Here, let me help you. (The teacher physically helps the child to secure his gun and rope.) Now you better go quietly, so the lion doesn't hear you. (The teacher pantomimes the stealthy hunter's silent crouching movements. The child imitates.) Now you're sneaking up on him. Can you see him?

Child: Yeh, he's over there. I'll shoot him.

Teacher: Well, let's try to capture him first. Take your rope. Try to rope him. Like this. (The teacher pantomimes the use of a lasso. The child imitates.) That's it you got him!

Child: I got him! I got him!

Teacher: Better put him in this cage. (The teacher suggests imaginary or prop enclosure.) Pull him over. (The teacher pantomimes pulling heavy and resistant animal to the cage. The child imitates.) That's it. Put him in there. Now, quick, shut the door and lock it! (The teacher pantomimes slamming slamming the cage door and locking it. The child imitates.)

That's it. You captured him. He can't get you now.

Child: Let's do it again!

Teacher: Watch out! The lion's breaking out of his cage!

(The scenario can be repeated) OR

The lion's too tired to fight you any more today. He's going to stay in his cage. (The play ends.)

The teacher again takes advantage of the aggressive child's relatively quiet and controlled play to give him the experience of playing out and controlling his aggressive impulses. The child can project his, sometimes frightening, aggressive feelings onto the wild animal - be it lion, tiger, wolf or any other ferocious toothed animal. In this way, he has the opportunity to confront and control these feelings.

Here, the child is not sure what to do with the ferocious lion he has created. The teacher uses a directive approach, including verbal directions, as well as considerable physical help and modeling, to assist the child in finding an adaptive, therapeutic solution to the threat of the lion. As the child's excitement mounts, the teacher even encourages the child to refine his control by capturing, rather than killing, the lion. With a child who was initially more excited or more fearful such a directive approach might have pushed him into uncontrollable excitement or anxiety, thus, disrupting the play. In the scenario as outlined, however, not only is there productive play, but it is likely that the child will incorporate much of what the teacher has modeled and will need less direction the next time such a drama unfolds.

This type of elaborate scenario could also successfully involve several additional children.

The Giant or Witch

The Scene: Two children, who started out happily playing together with a rope, have become locked in a rapidly escalating conflict that seems destined to lead to a physical fight.

1st Child: It's mine! Give it to me!

2nd Child: No, I had it first. It's mine!

1st Child: Give it to me! Give it to me!

2nd Child: I had it first! I hate you!

Teacher: (in a mock giant's voice) I'm the angry giant. I'm going to get you, unless you can get away real fast. Grrrr!

Children: (running). Aah! He's going to get us.

Teacher: (in same mock giant's voice) I'm the angry giant and I'm going to get you.

Children: (running & screaming) Aaah!

Teacher: (in normal voice) You better use your rope to tie up the giant. If you both work together you can tie him up before he gets you. (The teacher continues the menacing giant gestures and sounds, adjusting their volume and intensity so that the play is exciting without being too threatening or frightening.)

1st Child: Come on, let's get the rope.

2nd Child: Yeh, let's tie him up.

(The teacher now directs and assists the children in tying up

the giant.

Teacher: Aaargh! They've tied me up. I can't get them anymore.

Now the giant can "break loose and escape," or be "too tired to fight anymore."

This type of dramatic play intervention is, of course, just one possible way of dealing with a conflict between two children. Its use here is not meant to exclude or find fault with the use of reasoning and "talking it out" techniques. But, in situations where reason has flown to the wind, the appearance of a common threat often helps people to overlook minor misunderstandings. In this scenario, the children start out playing together happily and then, rather suddenly find their play being disrupted by angry feelings they are unable to control - symbolically, an angry giant out to get them. With the teacher's arrival as the giant, the children, possibly relieved at avoiding a punching match, can turn their energies toward escaping and controlling this angry adversary, now physically embodied.

In this scenario outlined above, aggression is redirected and play orchestrated in order to deal with the aggression in another way. This must be seen in contrast to denying angry and aggressive feelings and sweeping them under the rug. The teacher who would intervene in the conflict just described by saying, "Now, now, you don't mean that. That's not nice to say. Let's forget all about it and build some sand castles," is being unrealistic and doing the children a disservice. Each and every angry, aggressive episode can be

an opportunity for the aggressive child to learn to live with and control these feelings. The teacher must permit and even sometimes encourage aggressive play, while, at the same time, assisting the child in gaining mastery over the expression of his feelings.

In this scenario, the teacher adopts a fairly directive approach employing verbal directions. Initiating this particular intervention, like many others, involves a delicate sense of both timing and drama. The teacher must appear on the scene, as the angry giant, at such a time and in such a way that the children sense that he, as teacher, is not angry at them and, at the same time, feel invited to participate in the dramatic play to follow. Unfortunately, this sensitivity is not something that can be transmitted in writing, but only discovered through practice, observation, trial and error.

<u>The Family</u>

The Scene: Four children are playing together in the play house. There is a mother, a father, a baby, and an older sibling. The teacher is looking-on.

Baby: Waah! Waah!

Mother: What's that baby crying about now?

Sibling: Maybe the baby's hungry.

Baby: (nodding Yes) waah! waah!

Mother: (to baby) Can't you see I'm busy. You'll just have to wait 'till your dinner.

Baby: (even louder) waah! waah! waah!

Teacher: The baby is really angry at her mother now.

Father: (coming in the door) I'm home!

Sibling: (jumping up and down) Daddy! Daddy! Daddy!

Baby: (still louder) waah! waah! waah!

Father: (to both children) Stop that! I'm really tired from a long day at the office.

Sibling: Daddy, daddy! Let's play...

Father: (angrily) Now, stop that, before you get a spanking! (The Sibling throws some dishes on the floor, knocks over a chair and stomps off to the corner.)

Teacher: Now, the "big sibling" is really angry at the father. Sometimes children feel really angry at their parents when they don't get what they want.

In this scenario, the children are spontaneously playing out home situations they have all probably experienced many times. By playing the parents, they are identifying with their own mothers and fathers and trying to internalize parental rules and prohibitions. By playing the baby or child, they have the opportunity to relive and resolve past conflicts, to express past hurts and angers, and to practice how to deal with these feelings and situations in the future.

Since an elaborate and meaningful sequence of dramatic play is already underway the teacher remains non-directive. He lets the play unfold, making only a few non-directive comments. Yet, these comments are very important. With his comments, the teacher recognizes and validates the

feelings of the angry child, while, at the same time, offering a word - angry - that can be used to communicate these feelings.

At another time, the teacher might decide to support the child's internalizing of parental limits by commenting on a play parent's firm, fair disciplining of unruly children: "The father's not going to let them hit each other. He's helping them to put their feelings into words." In still another situation, the teacher would use directive techniques to create this type of family play scenario.

It has been pointed out, earlier in the paper, that the dramatization, the playing out, of angry and aggressive feelings can have therapeutic effects. For this reason, the teacher is urged to permit, and even sometimes encourage, as much aggression as possible in dramatic play. The aggressive child, in particular, needs to be able to explore these feelings in play. Of course, if things do get out of control, such as a child wildly throwing a block or violently brandishing a stick, the teacher must intervene and set protective limits. Yet, in many cases, the teacher will be able to help control the aggressive play from within the structure of the dramatic play scene itself. For example, he can give the child alternatives: "You can be the boss of the monsters," or "your monster can learn to be a good monster," and so on. The important point is that, in search of therapeutic outcomes, the preschool teacher, must learn to tolerate, and

even encourage the expression of angry and aggressive feelings in dramatic play.

All the scenarios have been intentionally designed to be adaptable to different individuals and situations. At the same time, it is hoped that they are sufficiently specific and concrete so that preschool teachers can make use of them in the midst of ongoing activity. It is the author's professional experience that having in mind a way to begin, a way to end, and a possible route from the one to the other can make it easier for the teacher to take the plunge into this unfamiliar water of improvisational drama and feeling. It is also strongly suggested that teachers, in addition to employing the scenarios described, use these scenarios as jumping off points to many other therapeutic dramatic play episodes.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

At this point, despite all the foregoing authoritative arguments, one might still very well advance the question: When so many other variables have an effect on personality development, how can you maintain that a few, or even many, dramatic play episodes in the preschool classroom can have a therapeutic effect on the aggressive child? It is certainly true that factors, such as socio-economic status, cultural milieu, and parental attitudes, have important determining effects on personality development which this paper does not systematically consider. This is one of the chief limitations of the study.

Nonetheless, it is maintained that the use of dramatic play, in the ways described above, can have therapeutic effects for the aggressive child. First, let us compare the child's dramatic play to its adult counterpart - the stage drama. Erik Erikson notes the power of the theater:

> In adulthood, the specialized institution for the awe filled expression of the dramatic is the stage. Here, above all, human conflict is projected into a circumscribed space-time in such representative form and supreme condensation that players and audience can experience the catharsis of affects, both timeless and universal. Genuine drama, well played can shake us to the bones: we know it is "just a play", but because of the dramatic condensation of time and space, we experience something of an intensified reality,

> unbearably personal and yet miraculously shared. (Erikson, 1977, p. 102)

The adult, in the theater, participates in the feelings portrayed upon the stage, is moved, and changed. Similarly, the aggressive child, involved in his dramatic play reality, is able to vividly experience the conflicts and emotions of his life in such a way that new resolutions and new mastery can be achieved. Dramatic play, then, like the stage drama, forms a discrete universe-separate from out reality, wherein profound emotional experiences and inner transformations may take place.

Secondly, let us consider how we as adults are helped, or help ourselves, to feel better and resolve our conflicts. More often than not, we find a generous friend, or a professional counselor, and we "talk it out." Well, children "play it out". In discussing the natural self-healing effect "playing it out" affords children, Erikson makes the same comparison. He writes:

> Let us remember here the simple, if often embarassing, fact that adults, when traumatized, tend to solve their tension by "talking it out." They are compelled, repeatedly, to describe the painful event - it seems to make them "feel better." Systems designed to cure the soul or the mind make ritual use of this tendency... (Erikson, 1963, p. 223)

Much as modern psychotherapy, in a setting separate from the ongoing realities of life, cures the adult by allowing him to "talk it out," the use of dramatic play in the preschool can have therapeutic effects with the aggressive child by allowing him to "play it out."

Of course, the real test of this assertion would be evaluation by means of a scientifically rigorous research study. However, and this is the second chief limitation of the paper, the techniques described have not been tested and evaluated in the field. Therefore, it is proposed that a controlled longitudinal study be designed to scientifically evaluate whether, and to what extent, the use of dramatic play with the aggressive child in the preschool classroom, as described herein, does have therapeutic effects. Similar research studies might be designed to evaluate the therapeutic effectiveness of the use of dramatic play with children experiencing other "transient adjustment reactions." The aggressive child and the conflict of initiative vs guilt could also be further explored. These are suggested as some possible lines of investigation for follow-up study.

For now, however, the primary purpose of the paper has been to describe some therapeutic uses of dramatic play with the aggressive child in the preschool classroom. After presenting an extensive theoretical background and rationale, the practical techniques, involving the use of dramatic play, were described. It is anticipated that they will be both useful to the preschool teacher and therapeutic for the aggressive child.

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